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ABSTRACT

Results of two studies that investigated the effects of guest readers on the reading attitudes of second- and fifth-grade children in the Meridian (Mississippi) schools are presented. Twenty-nine second graders and 29 fifth graders participated. Local television personalities, school personnel, former teachers, and parents were among the guests over the 8-week period. The Benton/Boutwell Reading Attitude Inventory was used to gather pretest and posttest data. Results of a dependent t test found significant differences ($p<.05$) between pretest and posttest results in both studies. In addition, there was a significant difference ($p<.05$) between males and females. Gains in mean reading scores support the hypothesis that attitudes toward reading improved as a result of the program. Strategies and methods used to improve attitudes toward reading are explored. Examples of the types of reading experience used in the study and the Benton Boutwell Reading Attitude Inventory were presented at the conference, but are not attached to this paper. Three tables present study findings. (Contains 3 references.) (Author/SLD)

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The Effect of Guest Readers on Reading Attitudes of Second and Fifth Grade Children

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Abstract

The purpose of this display is to present and discuss results of two studies which investigated the effects of guest readers on the reading attitudes of second and fifth grade children in the Meridian Mississippi public schools. The Benton/Boutwell Reading Attitude Inventory was utilized to gather pre and post test data. Results of a dependent t test found significant differences ($p < .05$) between pre and post results in both studies. In addition there was a significant difference ($p < .05$) between males and females.

During the session the two researchers will discuss the strategies and methods used to improve attitudes toward reading. On display will be examples of the type of reading experiences used in the studies, copies of both papers and the Benton/Boutwell Reading Attitude Inventory.

Introduction

There have been numerous studies over the past several years citing the alarming rate of illiteracy in the United States. In "Illiterate America", Johnathon Rozal reported that 25 million American adults cannot read poison warnings on a can of pesticide or a note from their child's teacher (Meinbach and Rothlein, 1991). Educators are becoming increasingly aware that not only are there a multitude of illiterate individuals within our country, but there is also a growing number of alliterate Americans. Alliterate individuals lack the habit of reading; they have the ability to read but choose not to (Vacca and Vacca, 1993). All teachers are aware that motivation is one of the keys to learning to read. If motivation is indeed an essential component in the reading process, how can educators address this aspect of reading?

Research has found that children who have been read to by teachers are significantly ahead of children who have not had such an opportunity, in the areas of vocabulary development and comprehension. The Shared Reading Experience allows students to develop concepts of print; associate written and spoken language; offers vicarious

experiences; improves listening, verbal, and written skills; and exposes children to genres they may not pursue on their own.

Reading aloud to students fosters a love for reading as students are allowed to view reading as a pleasurable activity rather than a monotonous activity driven by worksheets and workbooks.

When children see adults reading or if they are read to by adults, they are more likely to read themselves, thus diminishing the likelihood of becoming alliterate (Meinbach and Rothlein, 1991).

In 1985, the National Institute of Education published Becoming a Nation of Readers, which summarized reading research and drew implications for reading instruction. As the report stated, "There is no substitute for a teacher who reads to children. It whets the appetite of children for reading, and provides a model for skillful oral reading." Incorporating literature into the classroom reading program holds the promise of not only improving reading skills, but also developing a positive attitude toward reading that will transcend the classroom. Students who are motivated to read will move one step closer to achieving the ultimate goal of reading — developing a lifelong love of reading and books.

Treatment

The treatment began with the administration of the Boutwell-Benton Reading Attitudes Inventory to a class of second grade students and a class of fifth grade students. Following this, the students were visited each week, for eight weeks, by a guest reader. Local television personalities, school personnel, former teachers, and parents were among the guests (chosen by Boutwell and Sistrunk). The teacher and the guest selected a book together so that follow-up activities would enhance the book that was shared. All guest readers spoke of the importance of reading; how it affects their lives/careers and brings about knowledge and enjoyment. Following the story, students were engaged in: art, creative writing, role playing, games, and reinforcement of basal reading skills through literature-related activities. For example, following the book Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No-Good, Very Bad Day (Viorst), students wrote letters to Alexander, created custom-made sneakers, and played an alphabetical order game that required packing a suitcase for a trip to Australia.

Following the eight week period, the instrument was re-administered to determine if a change occurred in students' attitudes toward reading.

Results

Pre and post-test mean scores were compared for both groups and for combined groups. Results are presented in tables 1 through 3. All items in the fifth grade group showed mean gains. In the second grade group six items showed negative gain. This could be due in part to the maturity level of students responding to the items. Only one item in the combined group showed negative gain.

Conclusions

Students were observed to be enthusiastic during and after the guest reading experience. Follow up activities were reinforcing. Gains in mean reading scores support the hypothesis that attitudes toward reading improved as a result of the program.

2ND GRADE MEANS

N=29

QUESTION	PRETEST	POST TEST	GAIN
1	2.4138	2.3600	-.0538
2	2.0000	2.0000	.0000
3	2.5517	2.6800	.1283
4	1.6552	1.7200	.0648
5	2.1724	2.2000	.0276
6	2.5172	2.3600	-.1572
7	1.7586	1.6000	-.1586
8	2.5517	2.6000	.0483
9	2.3103	2.2000	-.1103
10	1.6207	1.9200	.2993
11	1.9655	2.0800	.1145
12	2.1724	2.2400	.0676
13A	2.5517	2.4000	-.1517
13B	2.6897	2.8800	.1903
13C	2.4483	2.4000	-.0483
13D	2.5862	2.8000	.2138
13E	2.3103	2.6400	.3297

5TH GRADE MEANS

N=29

QUESTION	PRETEST	POST TEST	GAIN
1	2.2414	2.6207	.3793
2	1.9310	2.2759	.3449
3	2.4828	2.5862	.1034
4	1.5172	1.8966	.3794
5	1.9655	2.3448	.3793
6	2.2759	2.6897	.4138
7	1.8621	2.0000	.1379
8	1.8276	2.3793	.5517
9	2.1379	2.5862	.4483
10	1.5517	1.9310	.3793
11	2.2414	2.6897	.4483
12	1.6897	1.8276	.1379
13A	2.4483	2.6897	.2414
13B	2.5517	2.7241	.1724
13C	2.3793	2.4483	.069
13D	1.9310	2.3793	.4483
13E	2.3448	2.4828	.138

COMBINED GROUP MEANS

N=58

QUESTION	PRETEST	POST TEST	GAIN
1	2.3276	2.5091	.1815
2	1.9655	2.1455	.18
3	2.5172	2.6364	.1192
4	1.5862	1.8364	.2502
5	2.0690	2.2727	.2037
6	2.3966	2.5455	.1489
7	1.8103	1.8000	-.0103
8	2.1897	2.4727	.283
9	2.2241	2.3931	.169
10	1.5862	1.9273	.3411
11	2.1034	2.3818	.2784
12	1.9310	2.0000	.069
13A	2.5000	2.5273	.0273
13B	2.6207	2.8000	.1793
13C	2.4138	2.4364	.0226
13D	2.2586	2.5818	.3232
13E	2.3276	2.5636	.236

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